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DE RUEHFR #0993/01 1441657

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3139

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 000993

SIPDIS

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BK, BO, KV, FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH GAERC RESPONSE HIGHLIGHTS ISRAEL-PALESTINE,
LEBANON, IRAN, IRAQ

REF: STATE 54639

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Classified By: Acting Political Minister-Counselor Andrew Young for reasons 1.4 b and d.

¶1. (C) Summary. On May 20 and 22, PolOff transmitted the U.S. demarche and supplemental points for the May GAERC to MFA Deputy Office Director for CFSP Mathieu Carmona. Separately, MFA DAS-equivalents Ludovic Pouille and Franck Gellet provided detailed information regarding French views on Israeli-Palestinian Peace, Lebanon, Iran, and Iraq. Recent interactions with French officials confirm good cooperation regarding Somalia and the upcoming Afghanistan Support Conference. End summary.

ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE

¶2. (C) French MFA DAS-equivalent Ludovic Pouille on May 20 said that the GOF fully agrees with our points on supporting Israeli/Palestinian peace efforts. FM Kouchner was to visit the region May 22-23 to attend a conference aimed at promoting private investment in the Palestinian territories. Pouille reaffirmed France's commitment to the political process launched at Annapolis last November and to achieving the economic development goals laid out in Paris last December. Privately, however, Pouille expressed chagrin that President Bush had not used these very points in his speech when he visited Israel and the region earlier this month. Pouille said the French MFA would have had a more positive reaction to the President's visit had these points been used publicly.

LEBANON

¶3. (C) Pouille did not have a chance to review and comment on the GAERC points on Lebanon, but, as reported by Embassy

Paris in septels, the French have wholeheartedly supported the Doha accord among Lebanese leaders to end recent violence and resolve the underlying political crisis. Pouille and French Presidency NEA adviser Boris Boillon, however, have strongly indicated that France will not agree to an EU designation of Hizballah as a terrorist organization. The principal reasons for this are (1) an immediate concern that doing so would dangerously polarize the delicate political situation in Lebanon and (2) would render impossible the sort of limited and discreet dialogue France maintains with what it considers to be a significant political force in Lebanon (representing a majority of that country's sizable Shi'a population). Pouille has indicated that the GOF would reassess this policy if and when a terrorist incident occurred that was traced back to Hizballah in a credible and convincing manner.

IRAN

¶4. (C) French MFA DAS-equivalent for Iran/Iraq/Arabian Peninsula Franck Gellet on May 22 expressed his customary disdain for the USG's insistence on presenting this sort of demarche on matters to be discussed by an internal EU body. Nevertheless, he reiterated France's continuing frustration with other members of the EU, most notably Austria, for blocking implementation of UNSCR 1803. Gellet said the motives behind such resistance was purely commercial in nature and, in Austria's case, stemmed from a desire not to disrupt Iran's oil industry (and thus jeopardize Austria's stake in it). Given the need to find consensus across 27 members, Gellet was pessimistic that the EU would ever take the implementing measures necessary to enforce compliance with the newly enacted sanctions. Not every country, as he

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put it, has made the decision to put its commercial interests to the side in order to uphold the NPT and prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability. France, however, would continue to fight the fight.

IRAQ

¶5. (C) Gellet did not comment on our Iraq points. However, he and others in the MFA are well aware of our interest in the EU collectively and at the level of member states being more engaged with the Iraqi government in all fields. France has many times indicated it would use its EU presidency to champion increased engagement with Iraq. Although there is a chance his plans may change at the last minute, FM Kouchner is currently scheduled to visit Iraq May 28-30. In addition to meeting Iraqi leaders in Baghdad, he is expected to open an embassy office in the northern city of Irbil. We would expect Kouchner, should his trip occur as planned, will use the GAERC to share his impressions and encourage his colleagues to follow suit with their own visits.

SOMALIA

¶6. (SBU) Recent interactions confirm that French policy on Somalia remains in synch with USG policy. Both sides worked for UNSC adoption of Resolution 1814 on May 15 and are working as well on a Security Council resolution on piracy in the region.

AFGHANISTAN

¶7. (SBU) Regarding the upcoming Afghan Support Conference, our discussions in Paris reinforce that planning for the June 12 conference and preparatory meetings is proceeding well and that lines of communication are open.

OTHER SUBJECTS

¶8. (SBU) The GAERC points on the Western Balkans, Georgia, Cuba, and Belarus were also delivered without substantive reaction.

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STAPLETON

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